

Pastor and People.

THE CITY OF GOD

Four square it lies, with walls of gleaming pearl
And gates that are not shut at all by day;
There evermore there wings the storm winds furl,
And night falls not upon the shining way.
Up which by twos and threes, and in great throngs,
The happy people tread, whose mortal road
Led straight to that fair home of endless songs,
The city, beautiful and vast, of God.
Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard,
The joy,
The light, the bloom of that sweet dwelling place,
Where praise is aye the rapturous employ.
Of those who there behold God's loving face.
Here, fretted by so many a tedious care
And bowed by burdens of the weary road,
We can not dream of all the glory there,
In that bright city, beautiful of God.
There some have waited for our coming long,
Blown thither on the mystic tide of death,
They catch some fragments of our broken song.
The while the eternal years are as a breath.
There we shall go one glad some day of days,
And drop forever every crumbling load,
And we shall view, undimmed by earth's low haze,
The city, beautiful and vast, of God.
In that great city we shall see the King,
And tell Him how He took us by the hand
And let us, in our weakness, drag and cling.
As children when they do not understand,
Yet with the mother walk as night comes on,
And wish that home was on some shorter road.
O, with what pleasure shall we look upon
Our Saviour in the city of our God!
—Margaret E. Sangster.

THE PRODIGAL SONS EPITAPH *

This is the Old Testament story of the prodigal son. What you have in the New Testament, set forth in wondrous detail by our Lord in His inimitable story you have condensed into this brief epitome of the experience of the man who wrote the psalm. There, as here, you have the history of a man who once lived, and of whom it is implied here, and expressed there, that he wandered on the wrong track; that he came to the end of that—he came to himself, he wandered back again, and brought himself into all temporal and eternal blessing by his return.

It is just, I sometimes think, what one might have expected to be seen on the headstone of the prodigal son after "he died, and was buried. We hope he lived long and did well, and that in the end of the day he redeemed the follies and disasters of the early part; then, at last, filled with years and honors, he lay down and died, and was buried. "Devout men carried him to his burial, and made lamentations over him;" and we will suppose that, as they do in this country, they put up a headstone and inscription. If so, I cannot think of an inscription more suitable than our present text.

"I thought on my ways." The beginning lies in serious thoughtfulness. Religion is not magic, it is miracle; but it is not jugglery, it is not witchcraft, it is not being "hypnotized"; it is not any of these things. You never put your intellect to a higher use than when you turned its powers upon your own ways, enlightened by the surest guide, the Word of God. I rather fear that many people think that, while you need to take your intellect with you when you go to hear a lecture on philosophy or on science, you can bring your addled head when you come to hear the Gospel. Get rid of that idea. Bring your best brains with you when you come to hear God's Word.

"I thought," that is the beginning;

* From a sermon preached by the Rev. John McNeill, in Chicago, May 28th, 1893.

to think for ourselves. Do not let me do your thinking for you. No, no; it is not "I thought on my sermon," but "I thought on my ways." In God's providence I may be a great help to you, or I may not be, but the thing has to be done by yourself. It is your own soul that is the issue at stake, and the thinking that will save it must be done by that soul's powers themselves.

"I thought on my ways"—a man who thought for himself, that was the beginning with him of all his blessings. Are you doing it? For there is an essential thoughtfulness in all our hearts, naturally, as regards the Gospel. You will get men who sit under the best preaching intellectually, and from the point of view of interest and of power to awaken the heart and the conscience and emotions, and they sit, and they sit, and they grow white, and they grow old, and they die, and leave no sign that ever once they were awakened up to think for themselves about their eternal drift and destiny.

While the stream of the minister's sermon is flowing, the mill-wheel of your thinking is going; but, after the sermon stops, how long does the mill-wheel turn? When the sluice is shut down, and the mill head is turned off, how long does the mill go? Before we get home, our thinking machinery has come again to a dead stand.

Secondly, he tells us he thought about himself. . . . To ourselves we ought to be in every sense of the term interesting creatures. And this text helps the preacher; it relieves him of a great responsibility that ought never to be put on him. I do not know your ways; you are a deep mystery to me. You do not know my ways. I can only see the surface current, and the winds that blow and curl and crisp the water on the top of it; but of those deep strong under-currents that flow through what can I know? . . . Do not expect me to work miracles. I don't know your ways. I don't know the secrets that lie within your ken. If I did, God knows I would use them; God knows I would preach them to you. I would spread them out before you till your heart stood still with this thought: "God Almighty must have told that man all my ways." . . .

Two or three channels into which we may run our independent thinking: Who am I? Where am I? Where am I going? All that is covered by the expression "thinking of one's ways." Who am I? The Bible and my own conscience give the only and the sure answer to that question. What is man? Ask philosophy, ask science, and, to their infinite shame, they are not quite sure whether we are gradually developed, not yet perfectly developed monkeys—or donkeys, maybe; they don't know which, nor whether we are going up or back. They have not made up their minds yet. Between my finger and thumb (when holding a few leaves of God's Book) there is what is of more value, as a contribution to that A B C question, "Who am I?" than is contained in all that ever the philosophers wrote, either ancient or modern. God's Word says: (my own conscience rings responsive to it) I am an immortal soul. God breathed into our nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul. There is in us a spark of God's own kindling, and God shall die the day I die. That is to say, I shall never die—never never. My body goes down, but my body is not I any more than my coat is I. I can do without one. I can do without the other. The old heathen poet was far ahead of some of the modern ones when he said, "Non omnis moriar" ("I shall not all die"). . . . Think of it. Born never, never to go out of conscious existence. You know what Christ said about one unturned sinner. The only thing Christ could think of was, "Good had it been for that man had he never been born." A good, alas! that could never, never, come his way; for he had been born. . . .

Where am I going? The Bible tells us more than the vague word "eternity." The Bible tells us where we are going. . . . We must all appear—put in an appearance before the judgment-seat of Christ. . . . You and I must take our turn to drift across the blinding blaze of light that streams from the judgment-seat of Christ. We must, like specks in the sun, take our turn of appearing in front of the judgment seat of Christ to be interpenetrated, to be shot through and through with that piercing light that will discover everything. . . . We are going to meet Jesus, and yet while I speak the hearts of some of you here cringe with fear or turn away with aversion. You do not like Jesus! Man, your hell has begun in that feeling; know what your hell will be. You do not like Jesus; God grant you may get put right to-night, so that the judgment day may have no terror for you, and that the judge may be your friend. . . .

That is what I am trying to do—to fill your soul with the image of Him, and the idea of Him, and the presence of your Saviour, a really human being, and yet God—having a name like you, a being like you, and a personality as you have; not a mere myth or a phantom, but Christ Jesus, who lives, who loves, who wept, who died, who rose, who is coming again.

Missionary World.

OUR FOREIGN MISSIONS, 1843 AND 1893.

BY GEORGE SMITH, LL.D.

From the Free Church of Scotland Monthly we take the following interesting and timely article:

The foreign missionary enterprise now carried out by the Free Church of Scotland, began in Africa in 1821, and in India in 1822, when the old historic Church of Scotland had not become a missionary Church. 1. The Glasgow Missionary Society sent out M. R. Thomson and John Bennie in 1821 to Kafiraria, and John Ross in 1823. John Ross remained, till his death in 1878, the father of our African Missions, leaving as his legacy his two sons, Bryce Ross, D.D., and Richard Ross, M.A., still in the field, though the latter is about to be succeeded by his son Brownlee Ross, M.A. 2. The year after, the Edinburgh or Scottish Missionary Society, which since 1796 has been working in West Africa, sent out the young Highland officer and son of the manse, Donald Mitchell, as the first Scottish missionary to India. He was followed by John Cooper, of the Secession Church; by John Stevenson, D.D., who became a chaplain of the Established Church; by Alexander Crawford, whose health soon failed; by James Mitchell, Robert Nesbit, and John Wilson, D.D., who in 1835, became missionaries of the Church of Scotland, and in 1843 of the Church of Scotland Free. 3. In 1829, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland sent out to Calcutta the first missionary appointed by it as a Church, Alexander Duff, D.D., thus, after a whole generation, atoning for the faithlessness of the majority of the General Assembly of 1796, and justifying the protest of Dr. Erskine, and the evangelical minority in that year. The Kafir Mission founded in 1821, locally kept jubilee in 1871 in South Africa. The jubilee of the Indian Mission, actually founded in 1830 by Alexander Duff, who survived to 1878, was observed in Scotland by order of the General Assembly of 1879, when the capital sum of £5,600 was raised as the nucleus of a supplementary sustentation fund for the native pastors of its India congregations.

Since 1830 continuity has marked the missionary history. In 1843, all the thirteen missionaries—twelve ordained, and one a teacher, afterwards ordained—and all the converts, leaving only the buildings and endowments, created chiefly by themselves, continued to carry out the commission first given to Alexander Duff in 1829 for Bengal, to John Wilson and Robert Nesbit in 1835 for Bombay, and to John Anderson in 1837 for Madras. In 1844, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, Free, added to these the Nagpoor Mission in Central India under Stephen Hislop, and took over half of the Kafir Mission in South Africa, the other half going to the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland. As in Scotland, the Disruption was the greatest Home Mission movement of the century, adding to the 222 extension churches organized chiefly by Chalmers, at a cost of £100,000, churches which now number about 1,100, so it proves to be the first of the two greatest Foreign Mission revivals of the same period, the other being that of 1858 which followed the Indian Mutiny, the first return of David Livingstone after crossing the continent of Africa, and the opening up of Japan and China.

The last General Assembly, moved by gratitude to God for the success of the Foreign Missions, and for the pledging of their services as missionaries of sixty-four students, spontaneously invited from its members a special thank-offering during this jubilee year of the Church, to be applied to the work of the Foreign Missions Committee, of the Livingstone Mission, of the Ladies' Society, and of the Committee for the Conversion of the Jews. The amount of the thank-offering was to be reported to the Assembly in the

course of its session, but the fund will be open for the receiving of contributions after it rises.

The largest sum raised by the old historic Church of Scotland, after Dr. Duff's personal efforts for nearly five years was not above £8,000 in the year before the Disruption. The Church of Scotland, Free, began in 1843, with only £327 in its treasury to support thirteen missionaries, their families and the native assistants, and to build and equip colleges, schools, and native churches. Such was the loyalty to Christ of that generation of its members, and such the catholic sympathy of evangelical Christians in India (led by Sir William Muir), in America, and other lands, that the India Mission started almost full-fledged as to the finance, no less than as to the spiritual staff of missionaries and converts. These fifty years have seen the pre-Disruption £8,000 increased to £13,433 in 1843-44, and now to upwards of £108,000 a year from all sources, of which £18,209 alone is from the collections of communicants in Scotland. The missions possess sums amounting to about £142,000, capitalized chiefly by the donors to endow certain stations and meet the repair of buildings, besides annual endowments of at least ten missionaries' salaries. This is exclusive of the capital of the missionaries' part of the Widows' and Orphans' Fund.

Of the sum of £108,004 raised and spent last year on the missions, two-thirds were from Scotland and one-third from the countries in which the missionaries labour. The personal staff of 13 India missionaries in May, 1843, has increased in May, 1893, to 153 men and women ordained, medical, and unordained, sent out from Scotland, besides a noble band of 43 missionaries' wives. The whole staff of Christian agents, Scottish and native, is 975, or nearly as many as the congregations of the Church in Scotland. There are at work in India, South Arabia, and Syria; in Cape Colony, Natal, and British Central Africa; and in the New Hebrides group in the Pacific Ocean.

In the year ending 31st March last, the whole sum raised and spent by the Free Church of Scotland on missions to the Hindus, Parsees, and Mohammedans of Asia, and to the fetish-worshippers of Africa and the islands of the South seas, was £108,004, 18s. 11d.

Never before have our missionaries been privileged to admit to the Church of Christ so many adults from the dark races as 1,002 in the twelve months, besides 917 children baptized. Most hopeful of all is the fact that the year closed with 2,909 catechumens under training for baptism. At our six colleges in India and South Africa, and 355 schools, so many as 24,641 were enrolled, and 21,957 were under daily Bible and secular instruction. The year was one of village movements towards Christianity, and only the first-fruits of a great harvest had been reaped, alike among the aboriginals of Santalia, the Pariahs of Madras, and the Bantu peoples of Central and South Africa. On its first jubilee, which is contemporaneous with the opening of the second modern missionary century, the Spirit plainly saith to the Church: "Behold I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it" (Rev. iii. 8).

A young woman who was trying to organize a boy's mission band, asked a friend to use his influence in interesting his younger brother. He replied: "Oh, you women must do the mission band work, but we men give the money. The Church to which this young man belongs boasts a new stained glass window costing \$1,500.00, while its annual record for 1892 shows the foreign missionary collection to be more than \$500. Have we grasped the Master's thought for His Church, or felt His great longing for the world."

What is the opium traffic? For the last ten years the average amount of opium sent from India to China, and the Straits Settlements has been 90,000 chests, each chest containing 140 pounds weight of the drug. All this opium is carefully prepared to suit the tastes of the consumers, and so to minister to the "opium habit."